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# POETRY AND THE COMPOSER

By E. H. C. OLIPHANT

**T**HAT the composer of vocal music must, in order to achieve complete success, provide work of more than mere tonal beauty or musical distinction or harmonic originality is generally recognised. Those are the purely musical features that may be demanded of a wordless rhapsody. Of him who is giving a musical setting to a piece of verse it is demanded also that he shall clothe the poem in a fitting musical garb, adequately express the sense of the words, reproduce the atmosphere, and reveal the hidden meaning (if the poem have any), so as to enable the music-loving public to enter into its spirit. Too often nothing more is asked of a musical illustrator of words; but, in asking only this much, the critics demand practically only what is asked of the writer of any piece of programme music or any composer endeavoring to create a definite impression or to excite particular emotions. For those who take the large view of the setting of a poem and are content to provide an equivalent for it that does not profess to be an equivalent in detail, words are really of little consequence. Debussy's "*Chevaux de bois*," for example, would under the same title make scarcely a less appeal to us were it destitute of words; and in piano pieces examples may be found of the representation of an underlying idea not conveyed in the title—the analogy to the hidden meaning concealed beneath the poet's words.

But, in addition to the recognised requirements of the composer for the voice, that he shares with all musicians, and those that he shares with every species of musical illustrator, there is a third class for which there is no analogy in any other branch of music. More or less unrecognised, the demands of this class are concerned not merely with the idea, but with the poem itself; and it is of them I particularly wish to speak. Before doing so, however, I shall say a few words regarding the four recognised requirements already referred to—that the composer shall find the true musical equivalent for the plain sense of the poem in its totality; that the variety of his setting shall be no less than the variety of the poem and shall adequately portray its various phases; that he shall have regard not merely to the words

themselves, but also to their dramatic value; and that he shall appreciate the poem's underlying significance, realise its spirit, and convey to his hearers all it hints as well as all it says.

The first two are not to be confused. In a sense they represent two clashing schools of song-composition—one holding to the theory that the music should convey only the general impression and not descend to detail, the other maintaining that every phase of meaning should be followed. There are, in fact, poems that seem to call for the one method of treatment, and poems that call for the other. It may be urged, then, that we have here not two requirements, but one only; but, in reality, the complete exclusion of either of these two conditions is a mistake. No poem can stand as a whole if its parts be not right, and no musical illustration of it can be satisfactory that does not recognise the call of the parts as well as the call of the whole. There must be a shading and a refining, so that the general impression may not be destroyed; but that is by no means the same thing as the ignoring of the individual words and phrases. The composer, then, besides satisfying the requirements of the poem as a whole, must pay due attention to the sentences that make it what it is.

It is a rare thing in these days to find any vocal composer of class unheedful of the meaning of his words. Even the purveyor of music for the dramatic trash whose claim to be called "musical comedy" can be justified only on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle is careful to fit his melody to the sense of the verse, and it is hardly to be doubted that the days when heroines died to waltz-tunes have gone never to return. Where one sees a composer of any eminence apparently ignoring the meaning of the words it is generally clear that he is doing so deliberately, in order to get away from a recourse to the obvious. To do that is merely to step out of the frying-pan into the fire.

The realism that results from the perfect musical rendering of the words of a poem is well illustrated in a few examples that occur to me—among modern songs, Ravel's setting of Renard's "Le paon," Debussy's rendering of the "Chevaux de bois" of Verlaine, and Mallinson's "We sway along," set to words by Henley; and, among earlier ones, Parry's version of Shakespeare's lyric "When icicles hang by the wall." The strut and the hoarse cry of the peacock, the infernal racket of the steam merry-go-round, the swaying of the train and the screech of the railway engine, the heavy tread of the bearer of solid logs into the squire's hall are all perfectly rendered in these admirable *Lieder*; but, if we take into consideration another song where the realistic quality is of

the very highest, Debussy's setting of Pierre Louÿs' "*La flûte de Pan*," we shall see of how much less importance is this realistic quality than is the imaginative; for it will hardly be urged that the wonderful rendering of the croaking of the frogs is the supreme merit of that loveliest of songs. Rather is its chief charm to be found in the marvellous realisation of the spirit of the poet, in the extraordinary ability shown in the creation of atmosphere, and in the perfect beauty in which the whole is bathed. In that greater quality which grasps the spirit behind the word, lays bare the whole of the lyric's meaning, and clothes his work with a new beauty, other songs that may be mentioned are Schubert's "*Doppelgänger*," Borodin's "*Belle au bois dormant*," Mussorgsky's "*Trepak*," Strauss's "*Im Spätboot*," and more than one of the songs of Wolf, Fauré, Ravel, and Kœchlin. Wolf's setting of Eichen-dorff's "*Das Ständchen*" is worthy of particular remark. The verse constitutes an address by the poet to a gallant whom he hears serenading his lady-love. The poet is reminded of his own serenading days and of the death of his sweetheart, and his sadness permeates the whole poem. Wolf, giving to the voice the words of the poet, gives to the piano the lute accompaniment of the distant serenader, and so, without any disturbance of the words or of the sense of them, creates just the right atmosphere.

The relation that the atmosphere of a poem has to the words as a whole has a parallel in the relation that the dramatic value of individual passages has to the words constituting those passages. When I speak of "dramatic value," I mean that behind what is said we have to consider by whom it is said and the circumstances attending its utterance. Thus in Housman's "*Is my team ploughing?*" we have to bear in mind that half the poem is spoken by a dead man. In Vaughan Williams' setting the general idea is excellently conveyed; but he fails to preserve the capital conception with which he has started. Apparently forgetting that the spokesman is but a spirit, he makes him shout out his last query to his supplanter, and the living man shouts back still more loudly. Fine as the song is, dramatically it goes to pieces. His setting of the last stanza might or might not be regarded as appropriate could we forget between whom the dialogue was being maintained; but that we cannot forget without disregarding the whole purpose of the poem.

For every one who knows Williams' setting of Housman's verse there are dozens who are acquainted with Schubert's setting of Goethe's "*Erkönig*." To question the perfectly dramatic characterisation of that song may be deemed blasphemous; but,

as a matter of fact, ought not the Erlking's words to be colored by our (and the child's) knowledge of his malevolence? Ought not his tempting to show, beneath the sweetness of his words, beneath the beauty of the musical phrases he employs, something of the evil that inspires them? Neither Loewe nor Schubert makes any attempt to do more than illustrate the actual words. Though it is obviously the boy's realisation of the wickedness behind the temptation that makes him so agitatedly fearful, the music shows us nothing to account for the terror he displays in the earlier verses.

If I am to name a song that, though undeniably beautiful, fails to reproduce the spirit of the poem it attempts to illustrate musically, it shall be John Ireland's setting of Masfield's "Sea fever." The tone of Masfield's verse finds no analogy in the robe of plaintive melancholy in which the composer has enveloped it. Vaughan Williams' setting of Stevenson's "Vagabond," on the contrary, is in just the right vein, for this composer, without being great in detail, has a marvellous faculty for finding the fitting figure for illustration of the general movement of a poem, though of the soul that lies beneath the movement he sees little. Where the meaning of a poem does not lie upon the surface, French composers realise the inward significance much better than do their English rivals, and much better than do the modern Germans, with the exception of Hugo Wolf; and it is not therefore surprising to note to how much greater an extent French composers choose for musical setting lyrics which leave much to the imagination. A Verlaine poem is an impression, calling sometimes on sister arts for interpretation; and French composers respond to the call gladly, as they would not do to the call of verse of much clearer significance.

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To render musically the atmosphere of a poem, to reproduce its spirit melodically and harmonically, to give adequate representation to the words, and to see beneath the words into the very soul of the poet: these things imply the possession of a strong imaginative faculty, but they do not necessarily imply that the composer is gifted with any literary sense. Too often indeed the composers of the English-speaking peoples have none, and make woeful display of their failing in almost every vocal work they put forth; and it may be taken for granted that they will continue to do so till a school of musical critics shall arise that will insist

that due attention be paid to the structure and form of the verse set. For that to happen, however, it will be necessary for the musical critics themselves to have a thorough mastery of verse-principles—to be, in fact, not merely musical critics, but, potentially at least, literary critics also.

The demands made on the composer with regard to the words as literature may be divided into three classes. The first calls for no acquaintance with the mechanism of verse; the second, merely for a slight literary instinct; and the third, by far the most important, a thorough understanding of the rhythmic principles on which verse is constructed. The requirements of the first group are three in number, all of a very elementary character.

First of all, the composer must respect the words of the poet: he must not alter or omit or add or repeat words to suit the exigencies of his melodic line, or for any other purpose whatever—not even to stress a vital phrase. Secondly, the pauses must be accurately fitted to the sense. Thirdly, there must be proper relation between notes and syllables.

To begin with the first of these three rules, it will readily be granted that to alter the words of a poem is unpardonable, and that to insert or omit words, to the ruin of the metre, is the act of an ignoramus; but it is no crime for a composer to omit an entire stanza, so long as the sense is not interfered with. The commonest form of neglect of this rule is not, however, in the direction of the omission of words essential to either the metre or the sense, the substitution of alien words and ideas for those of the poem, or the introduction of additional words, to the alteration of the verse or the meaning or both. It is to be found rather in the duplication of existing words and phrases, lines and stanzas. The repetition of an entire stanza is a very venial fault, especially where the composer can make a good effect by repeating at the end of a song the stanza with which it began. Even part of a stanza may thus be repeated without the composer's being guilty of a fault worth speaking of. No one, for example, is likely to blame Schubert for closing his "Gretchen am Spinnrade" with a repeat of the first two lines of the poem, since it is in entire harmony with the spirit of the verse and is dramatically effective. But the evil of a repetition is in inverse ratio to its extent. To repeat a stanza does not affect the poem, if the choice be made with discrimination (though of course many poems will admit of no such duplication), whereas the repetition of a single line alters the stanza-form (without, however, affecting the metre), while the repetition of only a portion of a line may seriously affect the metre. If it be a complete foot

that is duplicated, it is only in the length of the line that the metre is changed; but, if it be a single word that is doubled, or a whole foot and a portion of another, the rhythm is ruined. Thus if in the line

The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold

the last six words be repeated, it means practically the insertion of an additional two-foot anapæstic line. If the repeat consist of "like a wolf" only, the line becomes a five-foot instead of a four-foot one; but, if the composer repeat the word "down" alone or "down like a wolf," he entirely alters the metrical construction of the verse.

Duplication of the words of a poem may have three different effects. It may do no more than alter the stanza-form; it may ruin the metre; and it may (in addition to either or both of these evils) rob the verse of its beauty, its simplicity, its force, or its sense. The standard examples of sins of this character are afforded by Beethoven's "Adelaide" and Liszt's "Lorelei"; in the later and greater of these two famous songs, Heine's simple lines containing the direct statement

Und das hat mit ihrem Singen  
Die Lorelei gethan,

become such an insane medley of words as

Und das hat mit ihrem Singen  
Die Lorelei, die Lorelei gethan.  
Und das hat mit ihrem Singen  
Die Lorelei, die Lorelei gethan,  
Die Lorelei gethan.  
Und das hat mit ihrem Singen  
Die Lorelei, die Lorelei gethan,  
Die Lorelei gethan.

In Beethoven's song the senseless repetitions are perhaps even more irritating; but I might give dozens of instances of this class of fault from works of some of the greatest composers. Among present-day men, Bantock is an especial sinner.

Cases where, without impairment of the sense, the stanza-form is ruined by repetitions are also common. Brahms, one of the greatest of song-composers, does not hesitate to repeat lines, to the destruction of the mould of the poem he is setting, and one can scarcely find a leading composer who has not done so when it has suited his purpose. When the repeat is at the end of the stanza no great harm is done; to see the fault at its worst, one has to look for it in settings of some of the fixed forms of verse, such

as the sonnet, the rondel, or the triolet, especially those (like the two last named) based on a system of repeats in definite places. To repeat these lines elsewhere or to duplicate other lines anywhere is destructive of the form. It is therefore amazing to find Charles Kœchlin, than whom scarcely any composer living shows more respect for the verse he is setting, spoiling one or two of Théodore de Banville's rondels in this way.

Even more objectionable are duplications that are destructive of the rhythm. And here again I will illustrate from the work of Kœchlin, for the reason that such faults are exceedingly rare with him. In "*Le colibri*" he flaws what would otherwise be an almost perfect song by his repetition of "*tant d'amour*" in the line

Et boit tant d'amour dans la coupe rose.

It would be possible to cite many worse cases; but this one is interesting because rhetorically it is justified. An orator often makes his impression by repeating the phrase he wishes to imprint upon the minds of his auditors, and the musician may obtain an effect similarly. If it were possible to justify such a liberty, it would be justifiable in this case, for the composer has steeped the duplication of the words in the very languor of love. If there is no variation in the words, there is assuredly a variation in the music. There is no sterile repetition, but a revealing one, full of beauty, perfectly expressing the idea. From every point of view but the one, it is pardonable, and indeed admirable; but it has the fault of breaking the rhythm of the verse.

The question of pauses is also deserving of consideration. The musical phrasing must fit the idea like a glove. It will not do to have the voice flow on after "*I am the captain of my fate*" in Henley's famous poem, to rest after "*I am*" in the next line—"*I am the master of my soul.*" The composer who would do that would be on about the mental level of the Prologue of the "*base mechanicals*" of Shakespeare's fancy—"If we offend, it is with our good will." It might not be impossible for him to set

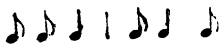
There is a providence that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them as we may,

with no rest at "*ends,*" but with a break after "*rough.*" To thus transfer the rest from where it should be to where it should not be is folly one can scarcely expect to find; but it is found nevertheless in composers of high reputation. In Cyril Scott's delightful "*White Knight*," for example, the words "*In a meadow fair*" are attached to the preceding "*Weep no more*" and separated by a

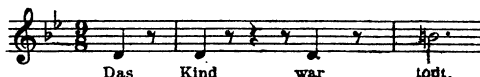


whole bar from the succeeding "By his grave friars four speed his soul with prayer," to which they properly belong; so that the lady who is addressed is bidden not to weep in a meadow fair, as if there would be some particularly heinous sin in watering a meadow with tears which should be reserved for her boudoir. Faults of this double character, where the pause is not where it should be and is where it should not be, are not remarkably common; but we do often enough find errors either of commission or of omission. Sometimes the fault is partly the poet's. In Wilde's "Requiescat," for instance, he has

Lily-like, white as snow,  
She hardly knew  
She was a woman, so  
Sweetly she grew.

George Butterworth, in setting the words "woman, so sweetly she," presented them as : trying, not very successfully, to preserve the lilt of the verse, he ignored the necessity for a separation of the words "woman" and "so." The composer cannot afford so to overlook the sense. By running straight on from the one word to the next, Butterworth practically ignored the comma, and, so doing, clouded the meaning; and the use of a crotchet accentuates the difficulty thus created.

Sometimes a rest is found between the syllables of a word. That is hopelessly wrong, unless the idea is to convey a sense of sobbing or violent agitation. The reason for it in such a song as Wagner's "Im Treibhaus" is difficult to discover; nor can any reasonable excuse be made for the rests between the final words of Goethe's "Erlkönig" in Loewe's setting—



As a cry wrung from the heart of a father, this might have been fitting enough: in mere narrative it is quite out of place: there is no call for utterance so spasmodic.

Of these three demands that, though concerned with the mechanism of the verse, call for no prosodic knowledge on the part of the composer (for even in the matter of the rhythm all he has to do is to avoid interference with the sequence of the words), at once the most serious and the least recognised is the need for so welding the music and the words that every syllable shall be represented by a single note. To allow the voice to wander over

a succession of notes for the expression of a single syllable, as in Purcell's "I attempt from love's sickness to fly" or Godard's well-known and attractive "Chanson arabe," is wholly to ignore poetic form. If, instead of singing, we read Charpentier's rendering of a line in Verlaine's "Chevaux de bois,"

Tournez-ez, au-au son joyeux des-es-es-es tambou-ours

we perceive how painfully absurd it is. The matter may be put in another way by contrasting the words to which the music has been wedded with words that it would have fitted. Thus, a line of the poem in Sir Gilbert Parker's "Pierre and his people" which Arthur Foote has made famous as "An Irish Folk-song" runs, "You'll be comin' back, my darlin'." The composer has fitted to it a musical phrase that would be better suited to a line consisting of the words "You'll be comin' back again, O my dearest one."

In singling out songs by Charpentier and Foote for examples of this fault I am not desiring to attach to those composers any evil preëminence. The difficulty is to find a composer who does not, when it suits his purpose, ignore the very obvious claim of the verse to dictate the contour of the music that is supposed to represent it. There are not many who follow the admirable example set by Jaques-Dalcroze in his beautiful and dramatic "Chansons rustiques," the greater number of the songs in that set observing the rule (whether it has ever been formulated or not) that in the voice-part every syllable shall have a note, and every note a syllable. Examples may of course be gathered from the songs of Schubert and Schumann and Franz; but the rule has been, on the whole, even among the very greatest writers for the voice, "more honored in the breach than the observance." By far the greatest offenders to-day are the composers of the English-speaking nations. The fault is perhaps to be seen at its worst in Noel Johnson's fine song "If thou wert blind"—

If thou wert bli-ind, I would gi-ive my si-ight,  
Lest my darkness should set me far from thee-ee.

That is horrible.

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Between this group and the more important one yet to be dealt with mention must be made of a rule which should be scrupulously observed, but is occasionally disregarded, often apparently as a result of ignorance of the simplest rudiments of English verse.

One showing himself capable of counting the number of syllables in a line of verse would not necessarily be considered a master of prosody; on the contrary, incapacity in such a matter on the part of a presumably educated man would be deemed astounding; yet some of our best song-composers show themselves incompetent to perform this elementary task correctly, or, if they are competent, most callously ignore the poet's intention, either suppressing syllables used by him or using ones he has suppressed. Examples are most easily found in the case of words where poetic license permits the addition of a syllable not employed in prose (as in the use of "bereavèd" for "bereaved"). For the composer to alter the poet's determination in such a matter is unpardonable. There are, moreover, many words in English in which the number of syllables is not rigidly fixed. Such words as "flower" and "heaven," for instance, may be treated either as monosyllables or as dissyllables. The choice is a privilege possessed by the poet; but that privilege does not pass to the composer, for he cannot depart from the lead of the poet without detriment to the verse as verse.

I have said that often his disregard of the poet's intention is due apparently to misunderstanding of the metre. It seems to be so in Cyril Scott's "Evening," where, in the second stanza, the name-word of the song, used by Dowson as a trisyllable, is taken dissyllabically, the deliberateness of it being shown by the binding of two quavers that might well have formed the first two of three syllables; but it may be that Scott, disliking this absurd outstretching of the word, preferred to sacrifice the metre rather than repeat the blemish. Further on in the same song, however, the poet is followed in making "oblivion" a word of four syllables, in order to enable it to rhyme with "sun." Here probably the composer felt that he could not depart from the author's rendering. He was "between the devil and the deep sea," with a choice between unfaithfulness to the poet and the spoiling of his own work. He might have realised that, in the circumstances, it was best to consider the poem not one for setting.

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The two remaining requirements, forming the final group, are more exacting than those already dealt with, since they call for the appreciation of prosodic principles: the one demands correct accentuation; the other, the proper distribution of notes on a duration-basis consistent with the length of the syllables

that make up the verse. It may be convenient to take the two in some measure together.

English poetry is a matter principally of the distribution of stresses. It may be said broadly that the stressed syllable is one in two or one in three, or it may be irregular in its incidence, consisting sometimes of every second and sometimes of every third syllable. The poetic stress is generally, but not invariably, identical with the stress natural in such a collocation of words. But English verse does not consist merely of an arrangement of accented and non-accented syllables; quantity also enters into it. A wonderful and not easily definable system of equivalences constitutes almost a root-principle of our prosody, three or four or five unaccented syllables often taking the place of an entire foot. Such a line as

For the poor benefit of a bewildering minute.

from that fascinating horror "The Revenger's Tragedy," is certainly not to be taken as a regular 6-foot line with a feminine ending, or even as a pentameter with a sprinkling of anapæstic feet (~~~~~), but as a line of four stresses distributed thus—

For the póor bénomit of a bewildering mínute.

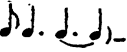
the long succession of unaccented syllables in the middle of the line being taken as the equivalent of a regular foot.

Everyone realises more or less that the bar determines the relation of the musical accentuation to the poetic stress; but very few appear to appreciate the fact that the "quantity" in the verse has its equivalent in the duration of the notes musically representing the syllables. The feet in any English verse are approximately of the one length; and, if an extra unaccented syllable be intruded, it and its fellow must each be passed over more lightly than a single unstressed syllable would be. Similarly, in a musical setting, the place of, say, a quaver for a single unaccented syllable must be taken by a couple of semiquavers for two such syllables—or at least the two together must have no greater value than a quaver.

In case anyone is in doubt as to the difference between accent and quantity in music, I shall give a very simple illustration.

Little Jack Horner  
Sat in a corner



verse is exceedingly small, and a study of many settings of English lyrics does not induce one to regard our composers as belonging to the minority. To turn to the work of French composers is to find quite another state of affairs. Unless we are to regard them as merely more careful or more conscientious, we have to admit that they are much better acquainted with the laws of verse. Either they have a better instinct for metre or they have taken trouble to master the principles governing it. It is in their favor that French verse consists of a succession of practically unstressed syllables; but it is not to be supposed that therefore it is impossible for them to err. To dwell on a syllable that, though sounded in verse, is not sounded in ordinary speech—as, for instance, the “ge” of “mensonge,” which, in Fauré’s magnificent “Arpège,” is amazingly rendere  is as bad a mistake as can be

made by anyone setting English verse—much worse indeed than the lengthening of the second syllable in “lovely” or “maiden.” In French, however, such sins are pleasantly uncommon; in English they are lamentably common. Too often, with us, a “feminine ending” is given by the composer a ridiculous degree of importance, so that the singer finds himself expected to sing about “beauTY” or “evER” or “ranDOM”; though it must be confessed that, as a rule, he does not in the least mind doing so, and is indeed altogether unaware that he is doing anything absurd. So, too, we find—less frequently, but still far too frequently—important words slurred over, three or four syllables, including one calling aloud for accentuation, being squeezed into semi-quavers in the midst of a group of crotchets.

If, as I have said, false accentuation is much rarer in French music than in English, I may yet mention a very marked case in a really beautiful song, Fauré’s “Accompagnement.” He has set one line thus:—



Here note the accent on the second “âme,” whereas the verse requires the accentuation of “leur” and “mon,” which are treated antithetically. Fauré, failing to realise the point, has mangled the verse.

For an example of both wrongful accent and false quantity in French composition, let me quote the following from Chausson’s “Cantique à l’épouse”:



That a stressed minim should do duty for the concluding light syllable of the verse is deplorable.

It is not necessary to give examples of obvious false quantities or errors of accentuation in English songs: the reader has only to take up half-a-dozen by some of our best composers, and he will be lucky if he finds three out of the six free from such faults. But, apart from flaws that cannot fail to strike anyone with the most elementary knowledge of the principles of English prosody, there are many that will strike the reader possessed of a real sense of verse-values. He who is deaf to the lilt resulting from the complex system of equivalences to which I have already referred is deaf to all that is most beautiful in the verse of Shakespeare and the other masters of our tongue. He, for instance, who reads the first line of Hamlet's famous soliloquy as if it were pure iambic verse ("To bé or nót to bé: that ís the quéstion") or so treats the King's line, "A very ribband in the cap of youth," turns the true poetry of swaying movement into the most ludicrous jog-trot. But, if English verse is the most difficult of all verse to master, the more call is there for our composers to give it loving study before they set to work to interpret it.

One difficulty in the setting of English poetry lies in the illustration of such a piece of verse as that of Wilde's already quoted, where the sense calls for the merging of one line into the next. The composer may be tempted to do as many reciters do in such cases—ignore the line-division. To do that, however, is to conceal the rhyme and practically to turn the verse into prose. That is the mistake so often made by elocutionists and by actors in Shakespearean drama. Such fault is the very reverse of the fault of Butterworth, who, in the passage quoted, gives us the rhyme to the obscuring of the sense, whereas Wolf, in his setting of Eichendorff's "Das Ständchen," obliterates the opening rhyme because the stress it calls for is unnatural. What is needed, both for declaiming and for singing, is that the sense shall be preserved (preferably by a proper provision of pauses), but that the line-ending shall receive a certain degree of stress, however unimportant may be the word filling the position. Where, the natural and the poetic stress being at variance, the composer cannot agree with both, he may be allowed to choose between them.

To how very slight an extent the rules here laid down are observed, or even recognised, may be realised by a consideration of any number of the world's greatest songs. I have examined 70 of my prime favorites, to find that 23 (about 33 per cent.) fail to show the required respect for the words of the author, three are at fault in pauses, 38 (approximately 54 per cent.) err in the matter of accentuation, and 43 (over 61 per cent.) fail to fit the length of their notes to the importance of the syllables they represent. (In all but the first of these four, the percentage of faulty songs is probably greater than I have stated, because I have not examined with such meticulous care as to be certain of having overlooked no flaw.) With regard to making the number of voice-notes coincide with the number of syllables, I tested 73 songs, adding to the previous 70 three Russian songs that I was, owing to my ignorance of the Russian language, unable to test in other respects; and of these 73 no less than 57 (or about 78 per cent.) were at fault. I made no investigation for deviations from the text's syllabification, because obviously there would be no opportunity for such errors in any but a small proportion of the songs. The songs examined were examples of Schubert, Loewe, Schumann, Wagner, Cornelius, Brahms, Wolf, Strauss, Mahler, Schillings, Fauré, Duparc, Chausson, Debussy, Kœchlin, Ravel, Roussel, Parry, Bantock, Williams, Butterworth, Carpenter and Mussorgsky; and, of the whole 73, only two fulfilled all the conditions, these being both French—one by Kœchlin, and one by Ravel. That is not surprising in view of what I have already pointed out—that French composers have much more respect for the poems they set and much more knowledge of prosodic law than have the composers of either the English or the German race.